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Gaps in Egypt's Mil. Inventory and Effects on War. Cap. DCI/NIO 493-75

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**Interagency  
Intelligence  
Memorandum**

*Gaps in Egypt's Military Inventory and the  
Effects on its Wartime Capabilities*

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Gaps in Egypt's Military Inventory  
And the Effects on its Wartime Capabilities

NOTE

This memorandum was developed to provide judgments on Egypt's present and prospective capacity for engaging in another round of hostilities with Israel. These judgments will be reviewed and updated in the broader context of the Arab-Israeli conflict and published in NIAM 35/36-2-75 ("Arab-Israeli Military Capabilities") in May 1975.

The most serious information deficiencies encountered in this study were:

- Quantities and types of major items of military equipment provided to Egypt since October 1973.
- Quantities and types of spare parts and ammunition provided to Egypt since October 1973.

The estimates of Egyptian units and major weapons inventories were prepared by DIA and, except as explained in the footnote on Table I, were accepted by the representatives of other elements of the Intelligence Community as reasonable estimates of the upper limits of Egyptian inventories.

This memorandum was drafted in CIA and the judgments were developed in consultation with representatives of the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the State Department, and the National Security Agency.

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### SUMMARY OF MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

- The Egyptian armed forces have shortages of certain major military equipment, particularly aircraft, in comparison to their pre-October 1973 inventory.
- Egypt's overall military capabilities are somewhat less than prior to the October war, although the Egyptian army is nearly up to its prewar armored strength. Vis-a-vis Israel, however, Egyptian armed forces are weaker than in October 1973 due to the increase in IDF inventories and capabilities.
- The Egyptian armed forces currently are estimated to be capable of a strong defense against an Israeli attack or of mounting a major offensive of a few days' duration in the Sinai. Although there is little information on Egyptian stockpiles of ammunition and spare parts, it is doubtful that Egypt could support sustained major military action without further Soviet resupply.
- Egypt would probably have to rely on joint military action with Syria to a greater degree than in the last conflict, primarily because Israel's military strength and capabilities have been significantly increased over what they were at the beginning of the October War.
- The recent deliveries of Soviet aircraft and other military equipment (believed to be under prewar contracts) have not been sufficient to restore Egypt's war losses.

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- The prospects for a full-scale resumption of Soviet military aid to Egypt to fully restore war losses and further modernize the Egyptian armed forces are uncertain, but Sadat will feel less need for such aid if he can get a satisfactory new disengagement agreement with Israel.
- Purchases of Western arms as an alternative to Soviet military aid will improve Egypt's capabilities only over a period of several years, not in the near term.
- In the interim, Egypt will be dependent on a continued Soviet and East European supply of spare parts and ammunition to maintain its current level of combat readiness.

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1. On numerous occasions beginning in April 1974, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat has complained that the Soviet Union has failed to replace Egypt's October 1973 war losses, and that as a result Egypt is considerably weakened militarily vis-a-vis the Israelis. Analysis of available evidence indicates that there is some truth in Sadat's statements, as there are gaps in the Egyptian inventory of major weapons. This is particularly evident in the Egyptian air force, which is about 30 percent below its prewar inventory of combat aircraft. The Egyptian army also is slightly below its prewar armored strength, although the inventory has been upgraded with more modern weapons. The air defense SAM force appears to have an increased number of missile launchers. The Egyptian navy has received no replacements from the USSR for its wartime losses.

Major Weapons Shortages

2. The Egyptian Air Force. The current aircraft strength of Egyptian air force combat units is about 70 percent of the prewar level (see table, page 10). The 13 MIG-21 squadrons now average only about 13 aircraft per unit compared to over 20 before the war. The ground attack fighter force also has been reduced in aircraft per unit, and the number of MIG-17 and SU-7/20 squadrons cut from 8 to 7. The two squadrons of Libyan Mirages placed at Egypt's disposal prior to the October War were withdrawn in mid-1974. Cairo has recently begun to receive aircraft from France, and Egypt is now forming a new Mirage squadron. The Egyptian TU-16 bomber force also has been reduced from 26 to 23 aircraft since the war.

3. In addition to these reductions in air force combat units, the Egyptian helicopter force has been cut from 10 to 7 squadrons since the war, and the number of fixed-wing transport squadrons has been reduced by one squadron to a current level of five.

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There may be a shortage of spare parts in the Egyptian air force as well, although aircraft operational levels have remained relatively constant compared to prewar levels. Egyptian fighter units have about 80 percent of their assigned aircraft operational.

4. The Egyptian Army. The Egyptian army has fared somewhat better than the air force in replacing its major equipment losses. Of its five infantry, three mechanized, and two armored divisions, only one mechanized division apparently has not had its major weapons inventory almost completely restored to prewar levels. Overall, the current inventory of tanks and APCs in Egypt is estimated to be about 90 percent the prewar level. The armored inventory has been upgraded, however, with increasing numbers of T-62 tanks and BMP armored personnel carriers.

5. There is no accurate information available to compare prewar and current inventories of other Egyptian army equipment, but several reports of Egyptian attempts to obtain spare parts, ammunition, and antitank missiles from the Soviet Union suggest some shortages or insufficient reserves of these items.

6. The Egyptian SAM Force. Egypt's air defense SAM force appears to have been completely restored since the October War and is even somewhat larger. The number of occupied SA-2, SA-3, and SA-6 sites is slightly higher than prewar levels (150 vs. 140 SAM battalions in 1973), partially as the result of the presence of a third SA-6 brigade in Egypt. The force may be short of its prewar inventory of missiles, however, since the Egyptians reportedly have been asking Moscow for additional supplies and there is evidence of reduced SAM training exercises.

7. The Egyptian Navy. The Egyptian navy has not received from the USSR any replacements for the substantial part of its missile boat force lost or damaged in the October War. Except for its blockade

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of the Bab-al-Mandeb at the entrance to the Red Sea, the navy played a relatively minor role in the conflict.

#### Current Military Capabilities

8. Egypt's overall military capabilities are somewhat less than they were prior to the October War, although the army is nearly up to its prewar armored strength. Vis-a-vis Israel, however, Egyptian armed forces are weaker than in October 1973 due to the increase in Israeli inventories and capabilities. The Egyptian armed forces presently are estimated to be capable of strong defense against an Israeli attack or of mounting a major offensive action of short duration to achieve limited objectives in the Sinai. Although there is little information on Egyptian stockpiles of ammunition and spare parts, it is doubtful that Egypt could support sustained major military action without further Soviet re-supply.

9. Cairo is well aware that Israel's military strength and capabilities have been significantly increased over what they were at the beginning of the October War. Consequently, Egyptian leaders undoubtedly would have to be assured of full participation by the better-equipped Syrian forces before initiating any offensive military action against Israel. They would also want other Arab states to add to Egypt's inventories of Soviet and Western arms and equipment in the event of new hostilities.

10. Prior to late 1974, Cairo's military planning primarily envisioned a defensive role for Egyptian armed forces, with counterattacks launched only after successful defensive action against Israel. A recent report indicates that the Egyptians have begun joint military planning with Syria for offensive operations, based on the contingency that peaceful negotiations may fail to bring further Israeli withdrawals.

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Efforts to Obtain Soviet Resupply

11. The current shortages of major weapons in the Egyptian armed forces and their almost total dependence on Soviet equipment have forced Sadat to continue to seek Soviet and Eastern European aid to maintain a credible military capability. Despite the resumption of Soviet seaborne arms shipments to Egypt in August 1974, no major weapons systems such as aircraft, tanks, or missiles were identified in deliveries through the end of last year. Soviet deliveries consisted only of spare parts, ammunition, and ground support equipment ordered before 1974.

12. At the time of the visit of the Egyptian Foreign and War Ministers to Moscow in late December, there were indications that the Soviet Union was prepared to provide several squadrons of aircraft to Egypt under prewar contracts, along with anti-tank missile launchers and ammunition. The aircraft include about 24 MIG-21s, 18 SU-20s, and 26 MIG-23s, but they would not be sufficient to make up for war losses. Only the MIG-23s, about 10 of which were offloaded at Alexandria in early February, are new to the Egyptian inventory. They will provide some improvement in air force ground attack and air defense capabilities. At least 4 SU-20 attack aircraft also were delivered in late February. The deliveries may well have been spurred by Soviet concern over an impending Egyptian-French arms deal during Sadat's January visit to France. Nevertheless, the new shipments will hold out the promise of larger deliveries to fully restore Egyptian war losses and modernize the arms inventory, and thus help Moscow's bargaining position in Cairo.

13. A full-scale resumption of Soviet military aid to Egypt presumably is dependent on Cairo's willingness to improve the complete spectrum of its relationship with Moscow, including support for an

early reconvening of the Geneva conference on the Middle East and possibly the return of some Soviet advisers. Sadat is unlikely to consider a move in that direction until after he can determine whether Secretary Kissinger's current efforts have produced major progress toward a new disengagement agreement in the Sinai. In the event some progress in improving relations is achieved as a result of the recent Gromyko visit and the ongoing dialogue between Sadat and Brezhnev, Moscow may be willing to step up military deliveries.

#### Efforts to Obtain Western Arms

14. Faced with continued Soviet limitations and conditions for resumption of full-scale military aid and desiring to reduce future dependence on Soviet arms supplies, Cairo has turned to Western sources for new weapons. Saudi Arabia, in particular, has supported this shift and has agreed to help finance various arms purchases. At the Rabat Conference last October, the Arab oil states reportedly promised to contribute \$1 billion to aid Egypt, with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait each pledging \$400 million. Although the Saudis may not have attached specific conditions on all their aid, they undoubtedly would prefer that Egypt lessen its dependence on Soviet military assistance.

15. With the financial support of the Arab oil states, Egypt has been aggressively seeking arms deals with the West. The Egyptians already have received the first nine of some 36 French Mirage 5 fighters paid for by the Saudis, and purchase of another 36 Mirage IIIs or F-1s reportedly is being financed by Abu Dhabi and Kuwait. During Sadat's trip to Paris this January, he sought additional modern aircraft, naval ships, missiles, armor, and other military equipment. An agreement for an additional 50 Mirage fighters, probably a mix of Mirage IIIs and F-1s, apparently was negotiated, and further arms deals are likely to

be announced in the near future. The Egyptians especially want to obtain Western antiship missiles to arm their patrol craft.

16. The Egyptians have also been negotiating with the British. They want Swingfire antitank missiles, Lynx attack helicopters, and Hawk strike-trainer aircraft along with naval patrol craft. Cairo is especially interested in developing its own capability to produce major weapon systems, and may have concluded a contract to build the helicopters in Egypt under British license. They also are interested in licensed production of the trainer aircraft. Although there is reportedly some disagreement over the terms of the various agreements, particularly for offensive weapons, the

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#### Egyptian Arms Prospects and Military Capabilities

17. The major problem that the Egyptians face with seeking Western arms is that they can provide few "quick fixes" to current major weapon shortages and the resulting military weaknesses. Western arms suppliers do not generally have the capability to produce and deliver large quantities of new equipment in a short time, although older weapons can sometimes be taken out of inventory. The remaining new Mirage 5s on order from France, for example, will not be delivered until the end of the year, and the Mirage F-1 contract will take several more years to fill. Replacing the Soviet Union with Western arms suppliers thus is a long term, rather than a short term, project. The Egyptian War Minister, General Gamasy, reportedly has told Sadat that it would take five to seven years to re-equip and train the Egyptian armed forces with Western arms.

18. In the interim, the Egyptian armed forces are dependent on a continued Soviet and East European supply of spare parts and ammunition to maintain their current levels of combat readiness. The Egyptians are expected to press for Soviet assurance of renewed supply in the event of a resumption of fighting with Israel.

19. A full-scale resumption of Soviet military aid to restore equipment war losses and further modernize and upgrade the armed forces would improve current Egyptian offensive and defensive capabilities. Weapon systems of the types already in the Egyptian inventory could be relatively easily assimilated, although it would take longer to effectively utilize new and more sophisticated weapons and aircraft. The prospects for such renewed deliveries still are uncertain, but Sadat undoubtedly will feel less need and pressure for significant military aid from Moscow if he can get a satisfactory new Sinai disengagement agreement from the Israelis.

ESTIMATED EGYPTIAN COMBAT STRENGTH AND MAJOR  
WEAPONS INVENTORIES  
(As of 28 February 1975)

<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Squadrons</u>	<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Squadrons</u>	<u>Aircraft</u>
MIG-23	--	--	1	10
MIG-21	14	326 <sup>a</sup>	13	216 <sup>a</sup>
SU-7	4	100 <sup>b</sup>	4	65 <sup>b</sup>
SU-17/20	1	20 <sup>c</sup>	1	27 <sup>c</sup>
MIG-15/17	3	155 <sup>d</sup>	2	93 <sup>d</sup>
Mirage 5	2	30 <sup>e</sup>	1	9
TU-16	<u>3</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>23</u>
Totals	27	657	24	443

<u>Army</u>	<u>Prewar</u>	<u>Current</u>
Infantry Divisions	5	5
Mechanized Divisions	3	3
Armored Divisions	2	2
Ind. Armored Brig.	3	6
Ind. Infantry Brig.	3	3

Equipment

Tanks	2,100	2,000
APC	1,500-2,300 <sup>f</sup>	1,400-2,150 <sup>f</sup>
FROG Launcher	12	12
SCUD Launcher	0	18-24

Air Defense

SA-2 Battalions	70	75
SA-3 Battalions	60	60
SA-6 Battalions	<u>10</u>	<u>15</u>
Totals	140	150

Navy

Destroyers	5	5
Submarines	12	12 <sup>g</sup>
Missile Boats	17	14 <sup>h</sup>

*Footnotes on following page.*

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- <sup>a</sup> Includes about 40 in the fighter conversion brigade.
- <sup>b</sup> Includes about 20 in the fighter conversion brigade.
- <sup>c</sup> Fifteen SU-17s are in storage.
- <sup>d</sup> Includes 50 in the fighter conversion brigade.
- <sup>e</sup> These were on loan from Libya. They returned in the summer of 1974.

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<sup>f</sup> [REDACTED]

The higher estimate is based on an extrapolation from tables of organization and equipment (TO&E) of identified units. DIA representatives prefer the higher figure, but the National Intelligence Officer notes his own and other representatives' reservations concerning the methodology and suggests that the lower figure may be a reasonable estimate.

- <sup>g</sup> Includes two undergoing a long-term overhaul.
- <sup>h</sup> Includes two produced in Egypt since the war.

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